



Eddie A. Perez
Mayor

EDUCATION: BALANCING MOMENTUM AND MONEY **BUDGET WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE**

---NEWS AND COMMUNITY RELEASE---

(March 4, 2010)--- After a 30 minute delay for a fire alarm, the Committee of the Whole meeting got underway. Mayor Eddie A. Perez and the Court of Common Council invited Superintendent Steven Adamowski and Board of Education members to the budget workshop to add insight and analysis in regards to how to maintain the rate of progress Hartford is making in closing Connecticut's achievement gap while balancing the budget. The goal is to exchange ideas in order to close a projected \$40 million gap for the next fiscal year. Thursday night's cooperative effort was once again facilitated by Leadership Greater Hartford.

The BOE challenge is to weather the State's financial crisis while maintaining the reform measures that have led to overall improved student achievement and test scores. Like every school district, approximately 80% of the budget for Hartford schools funds salaries and benefits. Short of operating fewer days, school officials fear a reduction in personnel by approximately 180 positions.

Already, there is an effort to reduce transportation services to freeze these expenditures at \$22,000,000 and to freeze preschools funded at School Readiness Grant level of \$6,000 per student. Even with these strategies in place, there is still a proposed 5.53% increase for next year's budget.

Proposed ways to mitigate that increase:

1. Request an additional \$5M in local funding to offset Sheff tuition expense
2. Board approved union concession proposal totaling \$5M
3. Deferral of contribution to MERF defined pension plan for 2010-11
4. Reduction of non-mandated programs totaling \$5M (preschool, kindergarten, elementary counseling, library-media, athletics, and adult education)

Mayor Eddie Perez, who also serves as a member of the BOE, said, "These workshops have been extremely productive and the ongoing dialogue should continue to prove productive as we make every effort to maintain the positive momentum in education and be fiscally responsible as well. I firmly believe that investments in education, public safety, and economic development--- including a jobs strategy--- must continue to be our top priorities. We have made too much progress in the past eight years to turn back now."

Some council suggestions include consolidation of school health services and library services but school officials say some of these suggestions would take several months of study before implementation could occur.

The workshops air on Government Cable Access TV Channel 96 (streaming live on www.hartford.gov). The next COW meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 11th at 5:30 P.M. will focus on benefits and overtime and will take place in City Council Chambers.